

coming up the valley, and two divisions, under General Torbert, moving through Chester Gap, with four pieces of artillery and thirty wagons. On the 22d, the rebels attacked the division, nine miles from Harrisonburg, and drove it back, capturing forty prisoners. This morning Torbert attacked Fairfax near Gordonsville, and was repulsed and severely punished. He is retreating, and Torbert is preparing to follow.

The force here alluded to as commanded by General Hunter, numbers probably six thousand men, and on Wednesday last occupied Madison Court House on their way to Gordonsville.

The Richmond papers publish information from Southern Mississippi to the effect that great alarm prevailed in that section on account of the movement of the federal raiding party, under General Davidson, in the direction of Mobile. Quite a panic prevailed.

A dispatch from General Beauregard states that on the 10th of December our forces, eight hundred strong, occupied the town of Pollard, at the junction of the Mobile and Great Northern and Alabama and Florida railroads. It is about sixty miles north of Mobile, and is an important place.

Persons of the evacuation of Savannah prevailed in Richmond on Saturday, but were not credited. The Secretary, however, had a significant statement to the effect that if the news was true it was all for the best.

The Richmond papers state that great perturbation exists among the city negroes on account of a report that all the male negroes are to be put into the army, and in consequence they are running off in this week. On Wednesday night, seven being taken to Valentine Hall, of Union Hill, left taking their clothes, trunks, and even their household furniture.

It has been said the Wagon, been from the beginning the opinion of eminent military men that it would have been wise to abandon such coast towns as Savannah, and even Richmond, and retire to the interior. Sherman, who had got into the interior, makes an exception for Savannah.

The Examiner has the following editorial statement in reference to the mysterious secret session, which were so strongly denounced by Mr. Foote in his recent speech: "The secret session of Congress as a source of as much edification as the mysteries of Savannah or the unknown campaign of Tennessee. Value but unpleasant rumors are all of things therein done. It is whispered that the war of habits has been suspended without limitation and that conditions have been established for the country on account of capricious abuse of the executive power, have been excuses for an increase of that very power. Increase of power to do what? To use more states to throw away more armies for the gratification of personal spleen or in the vain pursuit of personal applause."

Thursday, Dec. 29.

WILMINGTON.

The Operations Against Fort Fisher.

Portress Monroe, Dec. 27, via Washington, Dec. 28.—I have just arrived here on the Santiago de Cuba, from off Wilmington. The attack on Fort Fisher commenced at noon of Saturday, the 24th, and was continued all day; was resumed on Sunday, and kept up with great vigor all day. The fort is much damaged. All the barracks and storehouses were burned, and the garrison driven to the bomb-proofs, and scarcely venturing to reply. A small portion of our troops landed Sunday afternoon, skirmished with great gallantry, pushed up to the fort, and actually entered the work and killed a rebel bearer of dispatches who was entering.

Lieut. Wallen, of the 142d New York regiment captured the rebel flag from the outer battery. Our troops also captured a whole battalion of the enemy, who were outside of their works, but our forces were withdrawn from the shore. When the Santiago de Cuba left the bombardment was continuing. On Sunday, the cables from the Santiago captured Paul Hill Battery, with 65 men, and brought the whole party off to the ships.

The torpedo boat was successfully exploded on Saturday morning, at 2 o'clock, but with what result is not known.

The weather has been most severe at Newbern and Roanoke Island. The oldest inhabitant never experienced such severe storms.

REFUEL ACCOUNTS.

War Department, Washington, Dec. 28, 1864. P. M.—Major Gen. Dix—The following extracts from the Richmond papers of today have been received at this Department:

FROM WILMINGTON.

The following official dispatches were read last night:

Wilmington, Dec. 27, 6 P. M.—To His Excellency the President of the Confederate States:—The enemy has re-embarked under the cover of his fleet. His movement is not developed. I have visited Fort Fisher and find the damage slight, except of the buildings not necessary for defence. Only two guns were disabled. The marks remaining indicate that the bombardment was very heavy. Major Gen. Whiting, commanding the defenses at the mouth of the river, Col. Lamb, commanding the Fort, and the officers and men comprising the garrison, deserve special commendation for the gallantry, efficiency and fortitude displayed under very trying circumstances.

Signed, BENJAMIN BRAGG, EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

GENERAL SHERMAN.

A New Campaign Entered Upon.

War Department, Washington, Dec. 28th, 1864. P. M.—To Major Gen. J. H. A. Dix, New York:

The following extracts from the Richmond papers of today have been received by the Department:

"The latest official advices from Georgia indicate that Sherman has already followed up the occupation of Savannah, by sending a force of cavalry, artillery and infantry upon an expedition, whose destination can only be guessed at from the direction in which it has moved. These troops are reported to have gone towards the Altamaha River, and we shall no doubt next hear that they have crossed that stream, and are moving to Southwestern Georgia in quest of the prisoners of war who were supposed to be at Andersonville.

"Sherman's programme for his grand campaign northward seems to be no secret. He will start from Fort Royal and move straight for Branchville, the point of junction between the Georgian and Carolinian railroads. He then proposes to follow the main lines of railroad, towards Virginia, stealing and murdering as much as he can by the way. All very fine, but if Sherman proposes Lee's discomfiture."

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

Two brothers, named Roeman, respectively 8 and 14 years of age, while skating in Cincinnati, on Monday last, in high tide, suddenly broke through the ice, and an older brother, 21 years of age, who was skating near the lake, went to their assistance; but they all three disappeared together amid the tears and cries of a number of spectators, and five citizens who attempted to rescue them had a narrow escape from drowning. The first intimation the parents and sisters had of the occurrence was the sight of their persons when they were brought into the house.

Friday, Dec. 30.

WILMINGTON.

Admiral Porter's Report.

Washington, Dec. 29.—The Secretary of the Navy received this afternoon the following, by special messenger:

NORTH ATLANTIC SQUADRON, U. S. Flagship, Malvern, at Sea, off New Inlet, Dec. 26, 1864. V.

Sir—I was in hopes that I should have been able to present to the nation Fort Fisher and the surrounding works as a Christmas offering, but I am sorry to say it has not been taken yet. I attacked it on the 24th inst. with the Ironsides, Canonicus, Malopac, Monadnock, Minnesota, Colorado, Mohican, Tuscarora, Wabash, Susquehanna, Brooklyn, Powhatan, Juniata, Seneca, Shenandoah, Patuxent, Thonotoga, Mackinaw, Maumee, Yantic, Kansas, Isaac Quaker City, Monticello, Rhode Island, Sassacus, Chippewa, Osceola, Tacony, Pontonoc, Santiago de Cuba, Fort Jackson and Vanderbilt, having a reserve of small vessels, consisting of the Ariel, Horwax, Wilkiness, Cherokee, A. D. Vance, Anemone, Ashob, Gettysburg, Alabama, Keystone State, Resolute, Emma Lillian, Tristram Shandy, Britannia, Gov. Buckingham and Nausomund.

THE POWDER SHIP.

Previous to making the attack, a torpedo on board supposed to be sufficient to explode the powder magazine of the fort, was prepared with great care, and placed under the command of Commander C. R. Rhind, who had associated with him on this perilous service, Lieut. R. W. Preston, Second Assistant Engineer, A. T. Mullen, of the U. S. S. Agawam, and Acting Master's Mate Paul Bayard, and seven men. So much had been said and written about the terrible effects of gunpowder in an explosion that happened lately in England, that great results were expected from this novel mode of making war. Everything that ingenuity could devise was adopted to make the explosion a success. The vessel was brought round from Norfolk with great care and without accident, in tow of the U. S. S. Sassacus. Lieut. Commander J. L. Davis, who directed his whole attention to the matter in hand, and though he experienced bad weather, and lost one of his rudders, he took her safely into Beaufort, where he filled her up with powder, and General Butler had arrived the night before, and I hastened matters all that I could, so that no unnecessary delay might be laid to my charge.

SAILING OF THE FLEET.

On the 19th inst. I sailed from Beaufort with all the monitors, the New Ironsides and the small vessels, including the Louisiana, disguised as a blockade runner, for the rendezvous, twenty miles east of New Inlet, N. C., and found all the larger vessels and transports assembled there: the wind blowing light from the N. E. On the 20th a heavy gale set in from the S. W., and not being able to make a port without scattering all the vessels, I was obliged to ride it out, which I did without accident of any kind except the loss of a few anchors, the monitors all behaving beautifully. Only two vessels went in order to avoid the gale, and fared no better than those at anchor. The transports, being short of water, put into Beaufort, N. C., and were not suitable for riding out at anchor such heavy weather. After the Southwester the wind chopped around to the Westward, and gave us a beautiful squally weather, which I did not affectly improve, and the transports with the troops not making their appearance, I determined to take advantage of it, and attack Fort Fisher and its outworks.

EXPLOSION OF THE POWDER SHIP.

On the 25d I directed Commander Rhind to proceed and explode the vessel right under the walls of Fort Fisher. Mr. Bradford, of the coast survey, having gone in at night and ascertained that we could place a vessel of seven feet draft right on the beach, and Lieut. R. H. Lawson, commanding the Gettysburg, volunteered to go in the Wilkiness, Acting Master Henry Harrison in command, and tow the Louisiana into position. At 10:30 P. M. the powder vessel started in towards the bar, and was towed by the Wilkiness until the embrasures of Fort Fisher were plainly in sight. The Wilkiness then cast off, and the Louisiana proceeded under steam until within 200 yards of the beach, and about 600 yards from the Fort. Commander Rhind anchored her securely, and coolly went to work to make all his arrangements to blow her up. This he was enabled to do, owing to a blockade runner going in right ahead of him, the forts making the blockade runner signals, which they also did to the Louisiana. The gallant party, after coolly making all their arrangements for the explosion, left the vessel, the last thing they did being to see her under the colors, and on reaching to their boats they saw the explosion of the Wilkiness lying close by. The Wilkiness then put off shore with good speed to avoid any ill effects that might happen from the explosion. At forty-five minutes past one of the morning of the 26th, the explosion took place, and though the stock was nothing like so severe as was expected, it shook the vessel some and broke one or two glasses, but nothing more.

OPENING OF THE ATTACK BY THE FLEET.

Daylight of the 24th, the fleet got underway and stood in line of battle. At 11:30 A. M. the signal was made to engage the forts the Ironsides leading, and the Monadnock, Maumee and Malopac following. The Ironsides took her position in the most beautiful and sensible manner, and opened a deliberate fire on the fort, which was firing at her with all its guns, which did not seem numerous in the north-east face, though we counted what appeared to be seventeen guns. But four or five of these were fired from that direction, and they were silenced almost as soon as the Ironsides opened her terrific battery. The Louisiana then took her position in line of battle, and the Wilkiness, after getting the range, were fired with rapidity, while the Mohican, the Colorado and the large vessels marked on the plan got to their stations, all firing to cover themselves while anchoring. By the time the last of the large vessels anchored and got the batteries into play, but one or two guns of the enemy were fired, the sea being driven by the wind, and the monitors, according to the plan, took a position on the northward and eastward of the monitors, and enfilading the works. The Shenandoah, Thonotoga, Mackinaw, Tacony and Vanderbilt took effective positions as marked on the chart, and added their fire to that already begun. The Santiago de Cuba, Fort Jackson, Osceola, Chippewa, Sassacus, Rhode Island, Monticello, Quaker City and Isaac Quaker City, according to the plan, took a position on the northward and eastward of the monitors, and enfilading the works. The Shenandoah, Thonotoga, Mackinaw, Tacony and Vanderbilt took effective positions as marked on the chart, and added their fire to that already begun. 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